



City of Rockville

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 23, 2008

TO: Scott Ullery, City Manager

FROM: Ann Wallis, Planner II; CPDS

THROUGH: Jim Wasilak, Chief of Planning *[Signature]*

SUBJECT: **Planning Commission Draft of the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan (TNP)**

A Mayor and Council Public Hearing on the Planning Commission Draft of the Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan (TNP) is scheduled for Monday October 13, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the Mayor and Council Chambers at City Hall. This memo offers a brief description of the TNP, and the recommendations it lays out for the future of the Twinbrook neighborhoods, and is intended to give Council members an overview of the main points of the Plan in advance of the Public Hearing. More detailed information about the planning process, and public outreach program, will be conveyed in the Mayor and Council Agenda Sheet that is being prepared for October 13.

On June 11, 2008 the Planning Commission approved a resolution to approve the modified TNP and forward it to the Mayor and Council with a favorable recommendation. The Planning Commission held three Public Hearings and a series of worksessions on the TNP before making their suggested changes to the Advisory Group Recommended Draft. These have been incorporated into a "redline" version of the TNP that can be found at Attachment 1. This document is set up chapter by chapter, with page references to the TNP Advisory Group Recommended Draft, which can be found at Attachment 2. Both documents are available online at <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/masterplan/twinbrook/>.

### **Background:**

The Twinbrook area is located in the southeastern section of the City and the neighborhoods are bounded by the CSX and Metro railroad tracks to the southwest, First Street/Norbeck Road to the northwest and the City's eastern boundary along Rock Creek Park and Twinbrook Parkway. The neighborhoods are bisected by Veirs Mill Road, which contains the primary commercial node in the area.

The City of Rockville Master Plan considers the area north of Veirs Mill Road to be Planning Area 7, *Twinbrook Forest/Northeast Rockville*. Planning Area 8, *Twinbrook*, is south of Veirs Mill Road. However, many City residents consider the "Twinbrook" neighborhood to be located both north and south of Veirs Mill Road, and for the purposes of developing a new Twinbrook

Neighborhood Plan, the two Planning Areas are being considered together. Considering the two adjacent planning areas together offers an opportunity to examine the land use and zoning elements, together with other shared concerns, in a consistent and even-handed manner.

### **Overview of the Draft Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan:**

The TNP lays out a vision for how the area might look in the next twenty years:

“Twinbrook has evolved from a low-density, single-family residential suburban area, into an increasingly diverse and densely populated neighborhood. One constant has always been a community that values civic engagement and quality of life issues.

The Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan seeks to preserve these strengths: by maintaining and enhancing the historic residential character of Twinbrook; by upgrading its publicly owned spaces and facilities; by intelligent planning/zoning that encourages easy access to retail and mass transit, provides for recreation while fostering community pride; and, by directing future growth towards mixed-use development on land currently zoned for commercial and industrial uses, as designated in this Plan.”

The TNP makes recommendations to help improve the area in both the immediate future and over the next twenty years. These recommendations cover all aspects of the community: the residential areas, the non-residential areas, transportation, the environment, and community facilities, recreation, parks and open spaces. The TNP is also intended to act as a resource for residents of the area and contains information on various City and County programs, together with the relevant contact information.

### ***Community Characteristics (Chapter 1: Introduction)***

The U.S Census 2000 indicates that the total population for the Twinbrook neighborhoods is 10,847, with 5,414 residents in Planning Area 8 and 5,433 in Planning Area 7. There were a total of 4,689 housing units, with an average household size of 2.8 persons per household. This compares with an average household size of 2.6 persons for the City as a whole, indicating that there are more residents per household in Twinbrook than in the balance of the City.

Family households made up 71% of the households in Twinbrook. This figure includes both married-couple families (56%) and other families (15%). Nonfamily households made up 8% of all households in Twinbrook. Female single parent households comprised 11% of the population, and one-person households comprised 21% of the population.

According to the US Census 2000 there were 272 residents (17% of the City total) of 65 years and older living alone in the three census tracts that make up the Twinbrook neighborhoods.

22% of the residents of Planning Area 8 and 16% of Planning Area 7 identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino in the 2000 Census, making those of Hispanic or Latino origin the largest minority ethnic group in the Twinbrook neighborhoods

The Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan addresses issues important to its residents and seeks to define the neighborhood's role within the City of Rockville and in the surrounding area of Montgomery County. The economy of metropolitan Washington D.C. continues to perform better than other parts of the country, leading many people, and the businesses that employ and serve them, to move here to enjoy the high quality of life and opportunity that this dynamic area offers.

***Land Use (Chapter 2: Neighborhood Land Use):***

There are approximately 1,300 acres of land within the two Twinbrook Planning Areas (7 and 8), of which the vast majority – 1,053 acres, more than 97% – is devoted to single-family housing. There is very little vacant land available in Twinbrook, and there is little vacant land immediately adjacent to the city limits that can be annexed in and developed. Future development within the existing corporate limits of Rockville will be either the redevelopment of existing sites, such as Twinbrook Commons (now Twinbrook Station), or in-fill on the few remaining vacant or underdeveloped lots.

The TNP recommends zoning changes for the multi-family residential areas and the existing commercial and industrial areas. The table below summarizes the approximate densities that each change might yield: more information can be found in Chapter 3 for residential properties and in Chapter 4 for the commercial and industrial areas.

**Proposed density increases: Dwelling Unit, Retail and Office Yield**

<b>Property</b>	<b>Current Zone</b>	<b>Current Sq ft/ Dwelling Units</b>	<b>Proposed Zone</b>	<b>Proposed Sq ft/ Dwelling Units (Including MPDUs)</b>
The Woods Edge 14001 Cove Lane	R-20	162 m/f	RMD-25	DU: +/- 185 Mix of housing types
The Forest 2000 Baltimore Road	R-30	168 m/f	RMD-25	DU: +/- 288 Mix of housing types
Veirs Mill Road Commercial Area	C-2	Current (excluding Library) Retail: +/-175,000 sq ft	MXNC	Max under zone: DU: +/- 800 m/f DU: +/- 60 t/h
		Max under zone: (excluding Library) Mixed commercial (office/retail): +/- 1,183,000 sq ft		Retail: +/- 150,000 sq ft
				Office: +/- 77,000 sq ft
AvalonBay Companies 12720 Twinbrook Parkway	I-1	Office: 50,235 sq ft	MXB	DU: 240 m/f
Lewis Avenue Industrial Area	I-1	Service Industrial: 112,063 sq ft	I-L	DU: +/- 50 m/f
				Service Industrial: 80,000 sq ft
				Office: 33,000 sq ft
Burgundy Center	C-1	Retail: 16,000 sq ft	MXC	DU: +/- 15 m/f
				Retail: +/- 16,000 sq ft

**Proposed Density outside the TNP area:**

- Within City limits, Twinbrook Station (formerly Twinbrook Commons) has approval for 1,595 multi-family units and approximately 545,000 square feet of retail and office space.
- The MNCPPC Twinbrook Sector Plan covers the section of Montgomery County bounded by Twinbrook Parkway, the CSX tracks and Montrose Road. It proposes 1,000 – 2,600 multi-family dwelling units and approximately 4.8 million square feet of commercial space for the planning area.
- Oxbridge Development at Rock Creek plans approximately 30 town homes on Baltimore Road just outside the City limits.

***Residential (Chapter 3: Residentially Zoned Areas: Housing)***

The 1982 Twinbrook Neighborhood plan was aimed at maintaining and enhancing the residential character of the area. The new TNP recommends retaining that commitment and seeks to ensure continued neighborhood viability and sustainability. Research, surveys and community input have indicated that, while Twinbrook residents appreciate the sense of community and access to amenities that their neighborhood affords, they have concerns about community maintenance and code enforcement issues. Lack of adequate code enforcement and overcrowding, together with parking, were considered to be major areas of weakness and threats to the community. On the more positive side, home improvement and expansion was regarded as a major area of opportunity.

There is concern that additions and infill development could alter the look and feel of the neighborhood. As land becomes more valuable, Twinbrook is also becoming the target of “teardowns”, where the existing homes are replaced with houses that approach the maximum height and bulk allowed by the Zoning Ordinance. The main recommendations are:

- Retention of the current residential zoning in the single-family and town home areas.
- Retention of the existing land use and zoning for the school and church sites.
- Recommendation against site assembly in the R-60 zoned areas.
- Monitoring of the newly proposed R-60 development standards to ensure that they are technically feasible for neighborhood homeowners.
- Review the City’s Housing Policy to determine whether the current MPDU program is meeting current and future housing needs.

In addition the TNP outlines mechanisms help the neighborhoods retain their character, while ensuring that residents are able to enhance their homes, should they choose to do so.

***Non-Residential Land Use (Chapter 4: Commercial and Industrial Areas)***

While very little of the Twinbrook area is zoned for non-residential uses, it occupies an important place in the community.

***Existing Commercial Areas***

There are approximately 19.35 acres of commercially zoned land in the Twinbrook neighborhoods – on Veirs Mill Road and at the Burgundy Center.

***Veirs Mill Road:***

The Veirs Mill Road corridor acts as both a common area and a dividing line between the two Twinbrook communities, and contains the main commercial area serving the neighborhood. Shopping centers are located on both sides of Veirs Mill Road, near the intersection with Atlantic

Avenue and there is an additional small retail site on Atlantic Avenue. The area comprises 17.41 acres, with approximately 11 acres on the northern side of Veirs Mill Road, and the balance on the southern side of the road. It is zoned C-2, the City's general commercial zone, which allows for not only the existing single story neighborhood retail structures but a variety of retail and office uses. Office buildings up to 75 feet high (six stories) with an FAR of 2.0 may be allowed by right in this area under the current zoning.

The Veirs Mill Road commercial area serves both the surrounding neighborhoods and customers from further afield. The community has expressed concern about the future viability of the neighborhood shopping centers, their security, appearance and maintenance, and the challenges they face in acting as "good neighbors" to the residential areas around them.

This area offers the potential for accommodating a portion of the residential growth that is anticipated within the City, and the region, over the next twenty-five years. It could be redeveloped into an attractive neighborhood center that would provide a "gathering place" for the neighborhood while meeting citizens' retail and service needs. Office and residential uses could complete the "mix". The TNP therefore recommends:

- That the existing C-2 commercial properties be re-zoned to a Mixed-Use Neighborhood Center Zone (MXNC) to create the conditions for such a center.
- The center should have a maximum height of 65 feet, facing onto Veirs Mill Road.
- Atlantic Avenue should be connected through the Shopping Center to McAuliffe Drive to create two developable blocks and improve traffic circulation.
- Traffic calming and pedestrian safety and accessibility should be emphasized in the entire Veirs Mill Road area.
- The City should explore the possibility of establishing a City of Rockville Police sub-station in the Veirs Mill Road commercial area.
- The City should review its policies towards neighborhood commercial centers, with a view towards strengthening the relationships between the business and residential communities, and the City.
- The City should give consideration towards using vacant commercial space in the Veirs Mill Commercial area for community use, especially for teenagers and senior citizens.

*Burgundy Shopping Center:*

The Burgundy Shopping Center is a small neighborhood convenience center located at the intersection of Baltimore Road and First Street on the western boundary of the area. The 1.94-acre site is zoned C-1 Local Commercial, which is intended to allow small-scale, neighborhood oriented, goods and services. The TNP recommends:

- Rezoning the Burgundy Center to MXC to retain the small-scale nature of the Center, but expand the uses to allow for a limited amount of residential units, should the owners wish to redevelop in the future.



*Existing Industrial Areas:*

The Twinbrook area has a relatively small industrial area adjacent to the Twinbrook Metro Station. The Lewis Avenue Industrial area comprises four sites with a total land area of approximately 5.40 acres that is zoned I-2 (Light Industrial). The low-rise office buildings at 12720 and 12750 Twinbrook Parkway in the Twinbrook Parkway Service Industrial area are zoned I-1 (Service Industrial). Many of the sites appear to have very little room for expansion, and the 1982 Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan recommended that the light industrial zone not be permitted to expand in size or height. The TNP makes specific recommendations for each of the two areas but recommends that both areas should remain within Planning Area 8 (and not be part of the Metro Performance Area of the Rockville Pike planning area, like the adjacent Twinbrook Station) and that no automobile-related uses should be allowed within the area.

*Lewis Avenue:*

Many in the community value the Lewis Avenue businesses and believe that the service nature of the area should be retained. However, this area offers the potential to absorb some of the population growth that is anticipated in the next twenty years. A shift towards a mix of uses is an emerging trend and sites that are adjacent to Metro are proving to be especially attractive for residential development. The TNP therefore recommends:

- Rezone to I-L. Amend I-L zone to allow Dwellings, multiple-unit, as a Conditional Use.

*Twinbrook Parkway Service Industrial Area:*

This is a triangular area between Twinbrook Parkway (on the east), Ardennes Avenue (on the south) and Halpine Road (further to the west). It is adjacent to the planned Twinbrook Station development, contains five separate properties and has a combined land area of approximately 8 acres. Three of the five sites lie within the City boundary and two lie within the County. The former Thompson's Dairy site at the intersection of Ardennes Avenue and Twinbrook Parkway was annexed into the City in 2003 and the owners are proceeding with the construction of a 150,000 square foot, 85-foot high office building. The MXE zone is recommended for this site, in order to comply with the terms of the Annexation Agreement. For the remaining sites, the TNP recommends:

- Rezone the two sites within the City to MXB to act as a transitional buffer between the higher densities along Twinbrook Parkway (in the County), Twinbrook Station and the adjoining single-residential family neighborhood.
- Should the two sites within the County annex into the City they should be zoned MXB.

*Draft Zoning Concepts for Veirs Mill Road and Lewis Avenue:*

The Planning Commission directed City staff to provide illustrations of what the Veirs Mill Road and Lewis Avenue areas might look like if they were to redevelop. A series of concepts were

developed that can be found at Attachment 3. More detailed information on these concepts is available on-line at <http://www.rockvillemd.gov/masterplan/twinbrook/>.

### ***Traffic and Transportation (Chapter 5: Transportation)***

The Twinbrook neighborhoods are bounded by arterial roads carrying a large volume of both local and non-local commuter traffic. The neighborhood's internal circulation system is largely dictated by the land use pattern, and is designed to direct traffic on to a limited number of collector routes. Traffic backups occur at the limited number of entrance and exit points.

Major improvements, such as intersection improvements at First Street and Veirs Mill Road and the Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit Plan (BRT) being considered by the State of Maryland also bring challenges to the neighborhood, and should provide additional impetus for commercial and streetscape improvements in the corridor.

Several large developments, such as Twinbrook Station and the Rockville Town Center will be completed in the near future and it will be important to limit any negative impacts that these developments may have on the Twinbrook neighborhoods.

Traffic and transportation issues are a major concern for the community. Residents are worried about both the volume and speed of traffic on the major roads and through the community, with vehicles cutting through the neighborhood being a primary concern.

The TNP offers a long list of recommendations aimed at improving safety and accessibility throughout the neighborhoods. A few of the recommendations are:

- The City of Rockville should support a soft-wheel circulator trolley that runs clockwise and counter-clockwise from: Rockville Town Center - Rockville Metro – Veirs Mill Road – Twinbrook Parkway – Twinbrook Station - Twinbrook Metro – Rockville Pike – Rockville Town Center to increase connections between the Twinbrook neighborhoods, the Rockville Town Center, Twinbrook Station and Rockville Pike.
- Review the functioning of the intersection of Lewis Avenue and Edmonston Drive to determine how it can be improved, and study the feasibility of additional traffic calming measures on Edmonston Drive.
- Study alternatives to Veirs Mill Road for planned neighborhood and shared-use bikeways to link Town Center with Rock Creek Park. (Consider Rockcrest Park as a bikeway/pedestrian way. Upgrade path and install environmentally friendly street lighting.)
- Study the feasibility of a pedestrian crossing across the CSX/Metro tracks at Halpine Road, or other area locations, to link the neighborhood with the Rockville Pike area.
- Review the City's Permit Parking policy to determine its impact on residential neighborhoods, and whether it should be used to limit the number of cars each household may park on the street.



### ***Environmental Issues (Chapter 6: The Environment)***

The TNP provides an overview of the existing environmental settings and natural resources for the Twinbrook community makes recommendations to enhance and preserve them. Sustainable practices are recommended for the neighborhood so that the parks, open space, streams and tree canopy will exist for future generations.

Twinbrook residents have indicated that they value their environment, appreciate the number of trees within the neighborhood and enjoy their access to recreational facilities and green space. However, several areas of concern were raised by citizens, were identified by staff and the Advisory Group, or have emerged in subsequent discussions. These issues include flooding, storm water management and tree maintenance.

### ***Community Facilities (Chapter 7: Community Facilities: Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces)***

The City provides the majority of the public services and facilities in the neighborhood. Responsibility for services such as education, fire/rescue, and libraries lies with Montgomery County, which is also responsible for a network of human service agencies and programs situated in the study area.

Demographic indicators show that the area is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. This change has an impact on both the kinds of social services that are required, and also on the kinds of recreational activities that appeal to a changing population. Flexible space is required – both indoors and outdoors - that can be programmed to serve the needs of different population groups.

The Twinbrook Station development will provide some measure of open space, but not recreational open space, such as ball fields, and there are very few opportunities within the area to create additional open space. The City and the neighborhood associations should investigate possible open spaces of whatever size for pocket parks, especially near the Twinbrook Metro Station.

The new TNP recommends that consideration should be given to the creation of a mechanism – such as conservation easements and/or an Open Space Zone - to protect City-owned parkland so that future residents may continue to enjoy it.

### ***Implementation (Chapter 8: Implementation)***

The TNP makes recommendations to help improve the area in both the immediate future and over the next twenty years. As noted above, these recommendations cover all aspects of the community: the residential areas, the non-residential areas, transportation, the environment, community facilities, recreation, parks and open spaces. Each of the subject chapters in the Plan was considered in the context of all other chapters. In order to organize the recommendations into an implementation strategy five key catalysts were developed. Each Catalyst identifies a major issue and lays out a series of recommendations to address it, together with

recommendations of who should be involved, and what supporting initiatives might be required to achieve the desired result. The community – and the City – can use the Catalysts to identify which initiatives should be pursued in the future. The five Catalysts are listed below together with their primary recommendations:

#### *Catalyst 1 – Residential*

Maintain and enhance the residential character of the Twinbrook neighborhoods to ensure continued viability and sustainability.

- Maintain the R-60 single family residential zoning in the Twinbrook neighborhoods but monitor implementation of the newly proposed R-60 zone development standards and consider allowing reasonable exceptions to the impervious surface limits if, due to the nature of construction, adding additional stories to a home is not technically feasible.

#### *Catalyst 2 – The Public Realm*

Maintain, upgrade and acquire publicly owned land to ensure that recreational opportunities, public accessibility and the natural environment enhance the quality of life for all residents.

- Increase open space and recreational opportunities, closer to new population centers.
- Provide greater access to recreational, social and commercial facilities.

#### *Catalysts 3, 4 – The Non-Residential Areas*

A key feature of each of the non-residential catalysts is that they recommend consultation with the property owners and the citizens who live in the immediate neighborhood prior to any zoning changes or redevelopment.

#### *Catalyst 3*

Promote the renewal of the Twinbrook neighborhood commercial areas.

- Replacement of maturing single-use commercial areas with mixed-use neighborhood centers that would provide additional residential options together with a wide range of goods and services to serve the neighborhood.

#### *Catalyst 4*

Promote the renewal of the Twinbrook neighborhood industrial areas.

- Improve transitional area between Metro/Twinbrook Station and the Twinbrook Neighborhoods. Retain uses that serve community while expanding allowable uses to enable owners to maximize on their location.

### *Catalyst 5*

Transportation and Accessibility: Promote safe and easy multi-modal access to mass transit, retail and community facilities.

- Enhance neighborhood quality by improving both the appearance and the functioning of the streetscape to link the community together.
- Implement a soft-wheel circulator trolley that runs clockwise and counter-clockwise from Rockville Town Center - Rockville Metro - Veirs Mill Road – Twinbrook Parkway – Twinbrook Station – Twinbrook Metro – Rockville Pike – Rockville Town Center to increase connections between the Twinbrook neighborhoods, the Rockville Town Center, Twinbrook Station and Rockville Pike.

As noted above, the TNP outlines a vision and makes recommendations to help improve the area in both the immediate future and over the next twenty years. It suggests a range of tools that might help the City, and the citizens of Twinbrook, reach that vision.

### Attachments:

1. Planning Commission Draft Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan
2. Advisory Group Draft Twinbrook Neighborhood Plan
3. Visualizations of Draft Zoning Concepts for Veirs Mill Road and Lewis Avenue.

cc: Susan Swift, Director, CPDS  
David Levy, Chief of Long Range Planning and Redevelopment, CPDS